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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000845

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: PM ALEXIS ON BOB MANUEL'S NOMINATION: THE KEY IS  
IN PREVAL'S HAND

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary and Comment. Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told me that President Preval could get Bob Manuel confirmed as Prime Minister if he would work with parliament, but said that even the president now acknowledges that the nomination is in trouble. Alexis denied that he is working against Manuel. He criticized Preval for not selecting Minister of Plan Bellerive, who he argues, has the experience and training to be Prime Minister. He reports that the current political crisis is harming the country, leaving an unacceptable political void. Alexis said that he looks forward to leaving office and will establish his own organization to carry his message out. Alexis's comments are, of course, self-serving - we understand that he has indeed been in close touch with those parliamentarians seeking to stop the Manuel nomination and he still sees Lespwa as his base for his 2011 presidential bid - but his remarks about how Preval managed this selection are on target. While there are those who argue that Alexis seeks to hang on to the job of PM, he certainly did not strike me as eager to do so under these conditions. He appears to recognize that it could indeed be a negative for his future if he did. End summary and comment.

12. (C) Lame duck Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told me June 10 that "the key" to getting prime ministerial nominee Bob Manuel through Parliament "lies in Rene Preval's hand." Commenting on widespread reports that the Manuel nomination is faltering, Alexis said that the president had called him the night before and acknowledged that Manuel is in trouble. Alexis said Preval was to blame: he had mishandled the parliament. He made no effort to lobby key parliamentary blocs, notably Lespwa, and did little to sell his candidate. Alexis pointed out when Preval finally met with Lespwa, his information was that the president talked about "everything under the sun" and did not mention Manuel's name until a parliamentarian brought it up. Parliamentarians, he said, needed to be courted; they needed to believe that the president and his prime minister would take their concerns into account. Preval did no such thing, and until he did so, any prime ministerial nomination was in jeopardy.

13. (C) Furthermore, the prime minister said, Preval made a major mistake in not sticking with his original candidate, Minister of Plan Jean-Max Bellerive. Although Alexis himself did not know Bellerive before they took office - the minister was Preval's choice - the PM said he grew to respect and admire Bellerive during their service together. He praised the minister's dedication and engagement, saying that he was

experienced, decisive and well-trained. Bellerive, Alexis said, had indeed been formally offered the PM portfolio, but at some point "other interests" intervened and the president backed away from him. In response to my question, Alexis denied flatly that he had used Bellerive to pay off Parliament during the votes of non-confidence against him, as has been widely alleged, saying that they had only a limited relationship.

14. (C) Alexis expressed concern that the current "political crisis" on the prime ministerial nomination is harming the country. The lame duck government is unable to take up new initiatives and critical governmental operations have stalled. Alexis said that Preval has a stack of dossiers "this high" - stretching out his arms - and nothing gets done. In the meantime, Alexis says, people are suffering. Alexis professed to be baffled by Preval's seeming inertia, claiming that the Preval of today is not the man with whom he worked during the president's first mandate. This Preval is, he noted, reclusive and prone to procrastinate. He said that following the first day of rioting in April down in Les Cayes, he urged Preval to speak out publicly and call for calm. Doing so, Alexis observed, would have headed off the more violent demonstrations in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere. Preval waffled, first agreeing to do so, then closeting himself in the palace and saying nothing until almost a week later.

15. (C) I asked about allegations circulating widely here that Alexis is working to block approval of his possible successors. Again, Alexis was unequivocal: he had no good reason to do so. He is ambitious, he conceded, but he knows his time is over for now and he must play a positive role in this transition to have a real political future. Nothing, Alexis assured me, will drive him from the Haitian political

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scene. He strongly believes that his tenure as Prime Minister, despite the problems, will be seen as a positive force. But, he noted, he was often hemmed in by the presidency and that limited his effectiveness. For instance, he said, Bob Manuel took over managing the CPSN (Committee for the Protection of National Security), the umbrella organization that includes all of Haiti's national security players, during the April riots. Manuel called the meetings, organized the agenda and gave the orders. Alexis washed his hands of the group.

16. (C) Alexis professed to be sanguine about his future, but expressed a strong desire to move on from the Primature now. He said he is getting restless, with so little to do there. (The building was almost empty.) He intends to open an office, after an extended vacation in the U.S., and prepare for the rest of his political life. The PM strongly hinted, but did not explicitly confirm, that he is gearing up for the presidential election of 2011. He will continue to speak out, he said, about issues of interest to the Haitian people and looks to maintain his close ties with friends and allies, both here and abroad. In that vein, he noted that he would continue to travel to Washington and recalled with pleasure his meeting with Secretary Rice.

SANDERSON